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Group Wants to Re-Open Tarkiln ✓

By SUSANNA SHEEHAN

This week, a group of Tarkiln Community Center users asked the Board of Selectmen to help them find a way to re-open the building, which was closed in October, and selectmen indicated they would be willing to investigate this option.

Mary Wilber, co-chairman of the Friends of Tarkiln, an organization of user groups and residents who support the restoration of Tarkiln, said the people who had been using the building urgently want to re-occupy it. Several hundred people used Tarkiln daily for a variety of activities, from artists to church groups to music and dance classes to boy scout meetings.

The Tarkiln Community Center on Summer Street consists of two former one-room schoolhouses dating back to 1871. It has served as a community center for 58 years.

Tarkiln had to be closed in October 2006 when an electrical surge crippled the furnace beyond repair. The surge was caused by lightning hitting a utility pole across the street from the building and starting a fire on a trans-

Preservation Committee is spearheading the effort to preserve the historic building that has been in constant use for 136 years. It is hoping to present an article funding the complete restoration, of Tarkiln at Annual Town Meeting next March.

Wilber said the Tarkiln building should not sit empty until the restoration begins (possibly in 2008) because it would be susceptible to vandalism and damage from rodents and weather. She said the sudden closure of the building turned the users out on the street and while they were doing their best in temporary quarters, such as the Senior Center, they wanted to return to Tarkiln.

"It would be devastating to us if we couldn't go back," Wilber said.

Many residents who used Tarkiln told selectmen how much they wanted to have the building re-opened.

Tag Carpenter, a direct abutter to Tarkiln, used to teach world music classes there. He said having the building shuttered hurt not only the users, but the entire town.

"There's a spectrum of activities taking place at Tarkiln," said Carpenter. "It

"Tarkiln is a very viable revenue-producing asset to the town," said Walsh.

Selectmen said that all fee increases must be reviewed and approved by the fiscal advisory committee and then supported by selectmen, so they could not endorse any increase without following the set process. They agreed to have MacDonald and Finance Director John Madden meet with Walsh to review her numbers to see if the money was there to replace the furnace and re-open the building.

Selectmen Chairman Andre Martecchini said the town would probably have to pay \$10,000 to replace the furnace and then find a way to collect the money from the insurance company. He did not close the door on opening the building.

"I don't want to say 'no' because we don't know," yet if Tarkiln can be re-opened, said Martecchini. "Like any good insurance company, you've got to fight them."

Wilber said the Friends of Tarkiln have raised \$1,500 to give to the town toward a new furnace and she pledged to continue fundraising.

BUILDING

~~starting a fire on a trans-~~
former, said Wilber. A gas
main also erupted in the
street.

Town Manager Richard
MacDonald said it would cost
\$10,000 to replace the fur-
nace and he was expecting
\$8,000 from insurance, when
just last week, the town's
insurance company refused to
pay the claim, saying the fur-
nace failed due to old age.

In March, town meeting
voters approved spending
\$125,000 in Community
Preservation Act funds to pre-
pare construction and bid
documents for the restoration
the Tarkiln Community
Center. The Duxbury
Historical Commission along
with the Community

Tarkiln," said Carpenter. "It
serves a unique and distinct
purpose. The building is not
helping us put our best foot
forward as a town. Please
open Tarkiln. It's a good deci-
sion."

Friends of Tarkiln mem-
ber Myrna Walsh presented
selectmen with a spreadsheet
showing that if the furnace
could be replaced, the build-
ing could cover its costs if the
users were to occupy it again
with a modest fee increase.
The user groups were paying
\$4 an hour. Walsh suggested
an increase to either \$7 or \$10
an hour. Re-opening the
building could bring the town
as much as \$30,000 -
\$50,000, Walsh said.